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MONTANA LABOR MARKET

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Monthly Review of
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

Albert F. Root, Commissioner — M. Joe Miller, Chairman — J. J. Smith, Commissioner

Mitchell Building — P. O. Box 1728 — Helena, Montana

FL-98 — JUNE 15, 1951

Twelfth Month in Series Increases in Employment

May is the twelfth successive month in which industrial employment estimates for the state are in excess of the same figures for the corresponding month of a year ago. The margin in May was 4,200, which by way of paradox is the least margin reflected by any month since last June, when it was 2,600. In January the difference mounted to 11,500.

Substantial Gains Over Year Ago

As related to the figures for May, 1950, employment during the last month shows substantial gains in contract construction, transportation, trade, service, and finance. Mining employment was unchanged, while manufacturing shows a moderately heavy decrease. Many of the employment gains are directly attributable to the Korean situation and the sharp emphasis which has been given all activities related to armament plans, preparedness, and production for the armed forces. Mining employment remained at the same level only because suitable applicants were not obtainable, even with a broad recruitment program under way. Decline in manufacturing employment occurred principally in metal processing plants, which converted to a six-day week in lieu of hiring replacements, a change-over which required several months in the fall of 1950.

Earlier Start on Big Dams

Employment on the dams at Canyon Ferry and Hungry Horse, on highways and contract construction other than building, rose from 3,900 a year ago to 5,600 last month, under the pressure for completion of these facilities in furtherance of the armament program. Conditions this spring permitted earlier resumption of work on such projects than was possible a year ago, hence the crews were more nearly approaching peak strength this May.

Traffic Volume Uses More Workers

An increase of 1,500 in transportation and utility employment from May, 1950, to May, 1951, breaks down into 700 on interstate railroads, 300 on airlines, buses and other transportation and of 500 in the utilities and communications. This, too, is in part a response to warlike conditions. Volume of traffic has maintained a high level ever since the Korean outbreak.

Trade Employment Expands

Retail and wholesale trade employment increases of 900 in employment result in part from the prevailing trend in the basic industries. Most of it, 700, was concentrated in retail trade and in turn was in eating and drinking establishments. Tourist traffic is a factor in promoting this seasonal upswng. The 200 advance

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STATE'S RESERVE LABOR SUPPLY DWINDLES UNDER ACTIVE SEASONAL HIRING IN MAY

Montana's reserve labor supply, as measured by active work applicants, dwindled in May to a mere 4,300, of whom 1,840 were women. This is 2,750 below the figure a month ago and 2,900 short of the available supply a year ago. The normal seasonal addition of school youths and instructors to the labor supply seems to have already occurred in part, due to the prevalence of job opportunities and the urgent demands of employers; some additional reinforcement is expected from that source during June.

Hard-Rock Miner Shortage Persists

Despite this depletion of reserves the actual shortages in specified occupations are no more acute now than they were a month ago. Experienced hard-rock miners are still sought and recruitment for that purpose has not quite kept pace with migration to outside summer jobs from the mines on the normal seasonal pattern. Carpenters, painters, electricians and bricklayers are scarce but no serious shortages have developed. Expansion of crews in service industries has absorbed available applicants in those fields in many localities, a condition which will be eased with the releases from classrooms. Journeyman auto mechanics are still in demand in principal cities.

Outdoor Work Nears Capacity

Logging and lumbering, highway construction, forest maintenance, railroad track work, and the two big government dams at Hungry Horse and Canyon Ferry were potent seasonal factors in stripping the labor market during May. Nearly full capacity has been reached in these outdoor fields, though they will continue to be active hiring factors for replacement of turnover and for occasional expansion of operations. Local skilled workers and applicants adaptable to the work involved may expect to secure employment on some one or more of the projects.

Trade and Service a Hiring Factor

Other factors in labor demand during June will be retail trade, the personal and mechanical service establishments, maintenance and pest eradication work on the national forests, the metal mines and the hay and livestock farms of the state.

Heavy Farm Demand Ahead

Farm employment reached its spring peak during May, is expected to recede slightly during the in-between season of June, and to reach new heights during July, August and September. The inmigrant labor upon which many farmers rely is an uncertain quantity this year. Most reports indicate a smaller stream of these transients than usual, due to competition of armament plants for labor of all kinds. Specialty work on the farms, such as beet culture, has been brought through the planting season and into field work with no acute labor shortages. About 1,500 Mexican nationals are in the state for this work, and a greater number of Mexican workers from border states. Present prospects are that some of these workers may be re-called by action of the Mexican government.

Two of Five Applicants Are Women

Women represent an increasing proportion of the available labor supply. As of May 25, there were two women for every three men in the active file, the actual percentage being 42.7. In April, the proportion was 32 per cent, March was 24 per cent, and at the close of February it was 20 per cent. Food processing, services, cafe work and sales jobs will absorb much of the female supply, but the usual demand is specific for male workers in the heavier industries.

Flood Danger at Canyon Ferry

Working forces at the Canyon Ferry hydro-electric and irrigation dam in the Missouri river near Helena remained static through late May and into June, under the threat of interruptions by flood waters in the annual June run-off. The cement pouring schedule has been maintained on a three-shift basis and part of the structure has been brought above the level of flood threat. Installation of spillway tubes has begun. Clearing of the reservoir site is being organized for this season but will be a minor factor in employment.

Hungry Horse Proceeds Steadily

Pouring of cement for the Hungry Horse dam in the south fork of Flathead river near Kalispell was at top speed through May, with few weather interruptions. More than half of the ultimate height of the structure has been attained. About 1,500 men are engaged for the prime contractor. Clearing operations were delayed by soft ground and snow and are only now getting into real progress. Qualified applicants available in the area will about supply the June demand.

Highway Employment Increases 300

More than 925 workers were employed on state highway contracts for roads, bridges, and miscellaneous improvements the last of May, with an additional 825 employed on maintenance and repair, a net increase of 300 over April. Contrac-

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Along the Hiring Line --- Field Summary June 1

Anaconda—Smelter has been running short of unskilled labor, has been accepting school youths of qualified age for the summer. Road construction projects nearing completion, new school and hospital at Galen working with full crews.

Billings—Supplies for building are now more readily obtainable but several commercial projects are deferred because of uncertainties. Principal employment demand is from trade, construction and private householders. Coal mining is in depth of its normal slow season. Out of 600 work applicants the last of May, 114 were over 50 years of age—76 men and 38 women. Farm demand was retarded through May by late spring weather; beet thinning well advanced with sufficient labor supply at hand, use of mechanical thinners has increased.

Bozeman—School applicants have bolstered a waning labor supply which seems headed to full employment by July and correspondingly acute shortages in almost all categories. Bridge construction has been deferred to July on account of steel supplies. Cement plant needs an additional 25 men by July 1. Contractor is starting on grandstand construction in face of limited suply of qualified labor.

Butte—Miner recruitment is continuing in eastern Montana and in California and Illinois with indifferent results, demand remains unsatisfied. Shortage has developed in carpenters, painters and most types of mechanics. Nearly two-thirds of available applicants are women and the available men are in the higher age brackets while orders are limited mostly to men under 45. Chemical plant nearing completion, may operate by September or October; part of construction crew will be retained for operations. Transients are lacking in comparison with previous years.

Cut Bank — Construction of seven buildings for government installation and five residences in town will start shortly. Labor supply extremely limited, nearly half of active file is Indian. New road job about to start, and another has recalled its crew after winter shutdown. Wet weather has interfered with hiring of farm workers.

Dillon—Two more extra gangs are to be added by the railroad in June, one gang of 100 is already on track maintenance. Forestry crews are also being recruited. Construction has begun on several small projects and demand for service workers and mechanics is beyond the supply. Farm and livestock employment has passed the spring peak and will do little hiring until after haying season begins in July. Limited flow of in-migrants furnishes the only supply in sight.

Forsyth — Adequate supply of beet-thinners has been brought in from Texas. An all-Indian track maintenance crew was hired here during May. Principal new supply of workers will come from the schoolrooms and from migratory labor.

Fort Benton — Building of business structures and residences has employed available applicants; additional projects are awaiting release of materials. Several highway contracts in progress. Demand and supply in balance, new hires will depend upon school youths and transients.

Glasgow — Construction hiring has been active at Fort Peck and Opheim, demand filled up to date. Highway and street paving contractors may require outside workers. Indian placements have been giving satisfaction. Agricultural hiring was brisk during early May, slower during last half. Beet-thinning began in June, their Mexican crews were utilized on the railroad pending the opening of the beet season.

Glendive — Construction hiring has been active but supply is still adequate. Farm jobs are at a standstill, railroad is hiring track crews. Shortage of restaurant help, sales clerks and service workers is developing.

Great Falls — Rush season for farm help is over until late June, when haying begins, supply appears sufficient. Demand for workers will grow with expansion of construction crews on the air base, contracts aggregating fifteen millions are scheduled for completion by October. Smelter and flour mills have been actively hiring new workers and replacements since May. Sheep shearing and beet thinning are scheduled to begin in early June but will depend largely upon specialist labor from other points.

Hamilton — Out-migration to armament plans and to armed services continues to deplete available labor supply in this area. No acute shortages in sight; local wage levels are not conducive to extensive in-migration. Transient flow is lighter than normal.

Havre — All types of labor are becoming scarce, expect some easing of the demand with the schools closed and vacation help available. Mechanics, brakemen, carpenters and plumbers in growing demand. Agriculture and railroad hiring is active, with principal reliance placed upon reserve supply of Indian labor.

Helena — Labor market is in approximate balance, with the supply less than half of what it was a month ago. Demand active for hard rock miners and construction workers. No present demand for carpenters, though experienced workmen are scarce. In-migration has been ample to meet farm demands, which will be at low ebb through June and until haying begins.

Kalispell — Logging and clearing employment has been retarded by recurrent storms and soft roads in the woods, a shortage of this type of labor will likely develop when full operations can be maintained. Some small lumber mills just getting started after the spring breakup. New road contract around reservoir site will require 100 men shortly. Four logging outfits expecting to start operations early in June. Hungry Horse project is employing 1,500 men on the cement work and power house, about the peak level for the season. Other work incidental to the project will require another 1,000 by midsummer. About 100 are being released with completion of power house special contracts.

Lewistown — Shortage of experienced agricultural labor developed in May and is expected to continue until fall. Outside work, including highway and building construction, has depleted the local supply, which will probably be exhausted by July 1.

Libby — More than half available labor supply is composed of women, and half of the male applicants are past 50 in age. Labor demand is brisk, with turnover above normal on seasonal jobs. Lack of suitable housing is a factor in making recruitment difficult. Lumber crews of the principal mill have been increased, especially in clearing, brush piling, pole treating, while smaller outfits are just resuming operations after the seasonal slump. A government installation in northwestern area is under way, using 15 men.

Livingston — Heavy registration of school youths and women comprise most of the available labor supply. Demand peak for spring season has passed and no new building construction projects are in sight; one road job is using 30 men. Railroad demand is at normal level with sufficient supply at present. Retail and wholesale trade is losing employees to the higher wage competition of armament plants in other areas. Out of 196 active work applicants 97 are women and 43 are over 50 years of age.

Malta — Railroad, construction and farm demand heavy through May. Work on local hospital was resumed after needed materials were obtained; underpass and highway jobs now fully staffed. Labor for beet thinning is at hand, working on rail-

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Reserve Labor Supply Dwindles in May

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tors on two road jobs covering 16 miles of highway, an underpass, four bridge jobs and three gravel stockpiling projects were ready to organize their crews, and eight new contracts were let during the early days of June, indicating a continuing expansion.

Hiring to Continue for Roads

The work in progress at the beginning of June included 32 road projects employing 720 men, 13 bridges using 150 men, and four miscellaneous jobs with 55 men. Three road projects, three bridges, and one stockpiling job were completed in May. Two other road projects and one bridge contract were suspended, to be resumed when conditions permit. Manpower requirements for the highway program will continue to offer new employment opportunities during the three midsummer months.

FOUR YEARS OF MONTANA INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT TOTALS, BY MONTHS (in Thousands)

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Ave.
1948	134.4	132.0	133.2	137.1	140.6	145.8	148.9	150.3	151.4	149.6	149.4	147.7	143.4
1949	137.1	135.5	137.7	144.0	147.3	151.0	150.0	150.1	149.8	148.2	146.1	143.3	145.0
1950	133.2	132.2	135.2	142.1	147.3	153.6	154.4	155.9	156.8	154.5	152.6	149.9	147.3
1951	144.7	143.0	143.0	148.5	151.5	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

Along the Hiring Line ---

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road track work until the field work begins in June.

Miles City — Labor supply is at low ebb, with about one-third in the over 50 age bracket and more than a third of the total are women applicants. Increased flow of transient labor from the Dakotas, Minnesota and Iowa has been apparent, meeting requirements of farm employers and the railroads.

Missoula — More workers are entering the labor market than in normal times; this includes students for whom the testing of aptitudes is proving helpful. Residential building will be in less volume this summer, due both to shortage of materials and to decreased demand for new housing. Local labor requirements are being met successfully from local supply, augmented by arrival of transients in less than usual numbers. No general shortage is expected within the next 60 to 90 days, though some special skills may be required.

Polson — Demand for logging and lumbering is increasing as that industry gets into full seasonal stride, with prospect of still further demands through June and July. Construction has not yet attained the pace of recent years and seems adequately supplied.

Shelby — More applicants for construction jobs than a month ago or a year ago, though shortages of carpenters, cooks and stenographers persist. Three road jobs fully manned; four residences to be built soon. Farm operations are 30 days ahead of the seasonal experience a year ago, with a present lull in demand which will become acute again about July 1.

Sidney — Labor supply extremely limited but expected to meet requirements up to July 1. Construction crews are at full strength, street paving will provide principal hiring demand in June. In-migrant Texas Mexicans supplied unskilled labor needs through May and have transferred now into beet fields. Youths from the classrooms will improve the farm labor supply. Experienced farm hands scarce.

Thompson Falls — Lumbering is at full seasonal scale, fully staffed but with inadequate reserves. One major mill is expanding its plant and will add to its labor force. High water is delaying bridge construction. Forest employment being taken by students. Most skills and semi-skills are in short supply.

Wolf Point—Construction labor needs all supplied, local labor sufficient. Farm labor in balance but demand for haying and harvest will more than exhaust supply. Few migrants appearing. Women for service in hotels and cafes are in demand.

Twelfth Month in Series Increases in Employment

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in wholesale trade payrolls is an evidence of normal growth, rather than expansion.

Upward Trend in Finance

Finance, insurance and real estate continued its firm, though slight, upward trend over the year period, emerging with an increase of 200 in employment. The various personal and mechanical services, ranging from hotel to picture show and motor repair shop, produced a 600 increase in number employed over the previous May. In the field of governmental employment, including federal, state and local, the growth was 200 for the year.

151,500 Estimated on May Payrolls

Total industrial employment figures in the preliminary estimate for May were 151,500, or 3,000 above that for April, manifesting a healthy upward movement as the state emerged from its winter period of seasonal shutdowns and industrial curtailment. Estimates are derived on a sampling basis by the Commission, in collaboration with the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA (1)

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)

INDUSTRY	EMPLOYMENT			Net Change	
	May 1951 (2)	April 1951 (3)	May 1950	Apr. 51 to May 51	May 51 to May 50
Total nonagricultural industries	151,500	148,500	147,300	3,000	4,200
Total manufacturing	16,900	16,700	17,700	200	—800
Durable goods	9,800	9,700	10,500	200	—700
Lumber and timber products	5,400	5,100	5,200	300	200
Primary metals	3,400	3,600	4,200	—200	—800
Other (4)	1,000	1,000	1,100	0	—100
Nondurable goods	7,100	7,000	7,200	100	—100
Food and kindred products	4,100	3,900	4,000	200	100
Printing and publishing	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	0
Other (5)	1,500	1,600	1,700	—100	—200
Total mining	10,200	10,600	10,200	—400	0
Metal mining	7,900	8,200	7,800	—300	100
Bituminous and soft coal mining	700	700	700	0	0
Petroleum-natural gas production	1,100	1,200	1,200	—100	—100
Quarrying and nonmetallic mining	500	500	500	0	0
Contract construction	12,700	11,400	11,100	1,300	1,600
Contractors, building construction	4,100	3,700	4,200	400	—100
Contractors, other than building	5,600	4,900	3,900	700	1,700
Contractors, special trade	3,000	2,800	3,000	200	0
Total transportation and utilities	23,300	22,500	21,800	800	1,500
Interstate railroads	14,700	14,200	14,000	500	700
Transportation except railroads	3,500	3,300	3,200	200	300
Utilities including communication	5,100	5,000	4,600	100	500
Total trade	37,000	36,500	36,100	500	900
Wholesale trade	7,600	7,600	7,400	0	200
Retail trade	29,400	28,900	28,700	500	700
General merchandise and apparel	5,800	5,600	5,700	200	100
Food stores	3,900	3,900	3,700	0	200
Eating and drinking establishments	8,300	8,000	7,600	300	700
Automotive and filling stations	4,900	4,900	5,000	0	—100
Retail trade not elsewhere classified	6,500	6,500	6,700	0	—200
Finance, insurance and real estate	4,100	4,100	3,900	0	200
Total Services and Miscellaneous	19,500	19,000	18,900	500	600
Hotels, rooming houses, camps, etc.	3,100	2,700	3,000	400	100
Personal services	2,400	2,400	2,300	0	100
Other (6)	14,000	13,900	13,600	100	400
Government	27,800	27,700	27,600	100	200
Great Falls Area (Cascade County)	13,900	13,800	14,100	100	—200
Manufacturing	2,700	2,700	3,200	0	—500
Transportation and Utilities	2,500	2,400	2,300	100	200
Trade	5,600	5,700	5,500	—100	100
Services and Miscellaneous (7)	3,100	3,000	3,100	100	0

(1) Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members, personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.
(2) Preliminary estimates based on return from sample of 620 selected Montana establishments.
(3) Figures previously released have been revised on returns from 922 such establishments.
(4) Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.
(5) Includes apparel, chemicals, petroleum, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.
(6) Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and professional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.
(7) Same as (6) above but includes finance, insurance, real estate and mining, and excludes employment in private education.

COMPARISON OF BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS IN MAY 1951 AND MAY 1950

Employment Service Office	New Job Applicants				Jobseekers in File				Job Placements				Employer Visits		Job Openings		U. I. Claims Week 6-9	
	May 1951		May 1950		May 1951		May 1950		May 1951		May 1950							
	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	1951	1950	1951	1950	1951	1950
Anaconda	107	17	44	16	89	9	184	42	112	10	17	10	76	45	147	25	31	107
Billings	294	46	345	110	663	130	820	181	776	231	1,014	206	224	131	501	323	179	352
Bozeman	205	66	93	13	58	11	184	44	338	93	297	105	157	140	246	225	18	40
Butte	148	10	100	22	317	15	667	116	178	44	210	77	206	89	350	331	230	498
Cut Bank	32	7	32	7	44	6	80	21	45	17	87	39	53	49	36	115	33	50
Dillon	150	45	8	3	19	4	64	22	288	40	159	50	55	65	194	57	17	21
Forsyth	24	3	36	9	129	25	51	18	202	15	147	13	68	53	117	19	6	11
Fort Benton	29	12	15	5	8	1	14	....	76	45	61	28	57	49	17	10	0	0
Glasgow	194	64	74	26	89	7	58	7	302	86	210	46	64	56	286	216	7	38
Glendive	76	15	19	4	121	29	68	7	122	36	62	25	32	43	53	20	11	43
Great Falls	322	71	183	53	457	78	777	204	606	214	408	140	252	140	531	289	193	401
Hamilton	37	8	43	6	225	41	189	40	343	24	191	15	157	112	71	56	34	71
Havre	59	28	45	9	58	4	92	23	379	73	336	41	126	82	145	137	19	62
Helena	76	14	198	69	158	35	376	103	443	213	271	106	159	147	517	288	56	156
Kalispell	372	89	277	103	671	217	1,064	329	252	86	371	189	185	162	390	402	157	353
Lewistown	37	5	40	9	87	8	118	26	113	41	106	42	93	109	71	121	53	60
Libby	14	1	16	4	80	10	136	33	86	31	61	15	29	34	99	114	49	83
Livingston	162	35	110	29	196	31	158	42	158	60	208	54	106	101	106	123	25	42
Malta	31	6	4	....	79	22	62	11	32	16	38	15	18	21	38	42	19	37
Miles City	95	28	65	20	77	15	172	47	298	90	409	66	95	101	182	127	31	103
Missoula	176	46	143	40	449	83	606	130	403	124	362	150	122	168	275	319	167	246
Polson	29	1	43	8	81	10	274	72	95	17	107	32	42	108	54	134	41	98
*Red Lodge	....	....	26	5	....	....	155	40	....	....	30	11	....	42	....	21	....	82
Shelby	42	11	31	7	24	2	74	10	232	84	180	59	103	88	138	223	9	37
Sidney	27	....	18	4	62	4	142	22	521	14	390	27	105	30	113	46	35	55
Thomp. Falls	17	6	56	14	49	13	79	12	58	25	40	8	112	36	77	25	37	37
Wolf Point	22	6	12	3	22	8	91	19	72	23	69	17	48	90	44	71	10	54
**TOTALS	2,777	640	2,136	623	4,312	818	7,214	1,779	6,530	1,752	5,871	1,596	2,749	2,291	4,798	4,105	1,467	3,137

*May, 1951, figures included with Billings. **Teacher Placement included in 1950 column totals only.

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

(Produced in cooperation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)
(Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel)

INDUSTRY	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	April 1951	Mar. 1951	April 1950	April 1951	Mar. 1951	April 1950	April 1951	Mar. 1951	April 1950
All Manufacturing	$73.34	$72.36	$62.63	43.2	42.6	40.0	$1.70	$1.70	$1.57
Durable goods	76.26	75.10	60.82	44.7	43.6	39.3	1.71	1.72	1.55
Primary metals	76.63	73.49	56.95	45.7	44.1	38.7	1.68	1.67	1.47
Nondurable goods	68.58	67.58	65.73	40.8	40.8	41.0	1.68	1.66	1.60
Food and kindred products	58.07	55.31	53.33	41.1	40.5	41.1	1.41	1.37	1.30
All Mining	78.01	75.97	63.83	42.0	41.3	37.6	1.86	1.84	1.70
Metal mining	76.23	74.42	59.54	42.8	42.3	37.6	1.78	1.76	1.58
Transportation and Utilities (except railrds.)	66.50	65.62	64.03	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Transportation (except railrds.)	76.05	75.06	71.03	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Utilities and communication	58.74	57.90	58.22	38.3	38.1	40.2	1.53	1.52	1.45

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